

# Social and Political Issues in Art

“These ghosts whisper that the principles of the past are still with us and remind us that history can always return as the future.”

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## Objective

1. After reading/listening to “Spies of Mississippi,” the students will illustrate the following quote in the form of a large painting:

“These ghosts whisper that the principles of the past are still with us and remind us that history can always return as the future.”

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## Standards

1. Content Standard: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
2. Content Standard: Using knowledge of \*structures and functions
3. Content Standard: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
4. Content Standard: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

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## Materials

The main material or resource is the book, “Spies of Mississippi: The True Story of the Spy Network that Tried to Destroy the Civil Rights Movement” by Rick Bowers.

- Pre Activities: Newsprint paper and pencils.
- Painting materials: canvas, acrylic paint, paint brushes, pencils, palettes, water cups, paper towels.

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## Procedures

1. Read the book, “Spies of Mississippi.” Parts of the books should be read aloud in class to allow for immediate class discussions. The app Audible is a good resource for reading the book aloud. (3 hours)
2. Make a class list of themes from the book. You could make the list on a chalkboard or smartboard.(20 minutes)
  - Racism
  - Education

- Segregation
  - Misuse of Government
  - Power
  - Bullying
  - Discrimination
  - Violence
  - Lying, etc.
3. Take a step outside the Civil Rights Movement. Look at similar themes from different parts of the world and time periods. Show and discuss the following pieces of art either on a smartboard/projector or large physical prints. (20 minutes)
- Pablo Picasso, Cubist Painter, *Guernica*
  - Diego Rivera, Social Realist Muralist, *El Vendedor de Alcatrazes*
  - Kathe Kollwitz, German Painter/sculptor, *The Grieving Parents*
4. Pick a theme from the list. Spend one class period researching/brainstorming your theme in a computer lab. Spend your internet time researching the issue you have chosen to speak out about. Keep your sketchbook next to you, and jot down quotes or words that jump out at you or speak to you. Use any images you may see to sketch out some 'thumbnail sketches.' Be sure to document the sites you visit. Your sketchbook should be a visual record of the research and documentation that you have done. (45 minutes)
5. Depict your social statement on a large sheet of paper. Checklist for studio work. (3 to 5 class periods)
- Theme should be illustrated clearly.
  - You may use acrylic paint for your painting.
  - Your image should draw the attention of your audience.
  - The image should be large and possibly cropped, going off the edge of the paper or depicting an unusual angle or scene.
  - Think about what point of view you want to depict. Add minimal text (See art of [Barbara Kruger](#)) – or make it all about the words (see [Jenny Holzer](#)).
  - Be sure all white space on your paper is filled in.
  - Choose your color scheme carefully. You may want to choose a monochromatic color scheme (all blues, all reds, etc.)
  - Take care of and clean all art materials appropriately!
6. Closing Activity. The students will write an artist's statement about their illustration. The writing will be in the form of a Collins Type 2.

